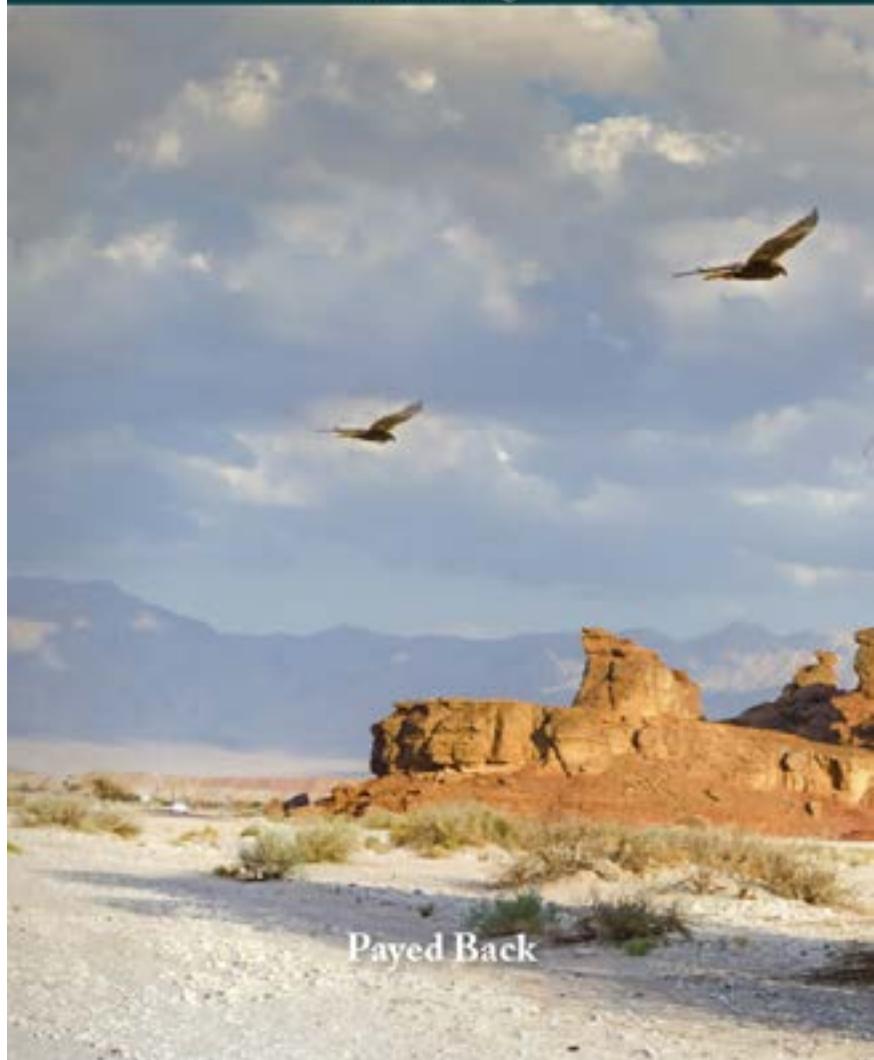


Obadiah Explained & Applied 31

Ger de Koning



Payed Back

The Book of Obadiah

The Book of Obadiah

Paid Back

Ger de Koning

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Abbreviations of the Names of the Books of the Bible

Old Testament

Gen – Genesis
Exo – Exodus
Lev – Leviticus
Num – Numbers
Deu – Deuteronomy
Jos – Joshua
Jdg – Judges
Rth – Ruth
1Sam – First Samuel
2Sam – Second Samuel
1Kgs – First Kings
2Kgs – Second Kings
1Chr – First Chronicles
2Chr – Second Chronicles
Ezra – Ezra
Neh – Nehemiah
Est – Esther
Job – Job
Psa – Psalms
Pro – Proverbs
Ecc – Ecclesiastes
Song – Song of Songs
Isa – Isaiah
Jer – Jeremiah
Lam – Lamentations
Eze – Ezekiel
Dan – Daniel
Hos – Hosea
Joel – Joel
Amos – Amos
Oba – Obadiah
Jona – Jonah

Mic – Micah
Nah – Nahum
Hab – Habakkuk
Zep – Zephaniah
Hag – Haggai
Zec – Zechariah
Mal – Malachi

New Testament

Mt – Gospel of Matthew
Mk – Gospel of Mark
Lk – Gospel of Luke
Jn – Gospel of John
Acts – Acts of the Apostles
Rom – Letter to the Romans
1Cor – First Letter to the Corinthians
2Cor – Second Letter to the Corinthians
Gal – Letter to the Galatians
Eph – Letter to the Ephesians
Phil – Letter to the Philippians
Col – Letter to the Colossians
1Thes – First Letter to the Thessalonians
2Thes – Second Letter to the Thessalonians
1Tim – First Letter to Timothy
2Tim – Second Letter to Timothy
Tit – Letter to Titus
Phlm – Letter to Philemon
Heb – Letter to the Hebrews
Jam – Letter of James
1Pet – First Letter of Peter
2Pet – Second Letter of Peter
1Jn – First Letter of John
2Jn – Second Letter of John
3Jn – Third Letter of John
Jude – Letter of Jude
Rev – Revelation

Explanation of General Format

PERSONAL PRONOUNS are capitalized when pertaining to Deity.

BRACKETS [] are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words which are not found in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek but implied by it.

SHARP BRACKETS < > are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words possibly not in the original writings.

When **ASTERISKS *** are used in New Testament quotations, it is to mark verbs that are historical presents in the Greek which have been translated with an English past tense in order to conform to modern usage. The translators recognized that in some contexts the present tense seems more unexpected and unjustified to the English reader than a past tense would have been. But Greek authors frequently used the present tense for the sake of heightened vividness, thereby transporting their readers in imagination to the actual scene at the time of occurrence. However, the translators felt that it would be wise to change these historical presents to English past tenses.

ALL CAPS in the New Testament quotations are used in the text to indicate Old Testament quotations or obvious references to Old Testament texts.

The Book of Obadiah

Introduction

Obadiah is fourth in the row of the twelve minor prophets whose books in the Dutch Bibles are at the end of the Old Testament. The book that bears his name is the smallest book we have in the Bible. You have to know the order of the minor prophets by heart to find this book without too much trouble.

But we would have missed a lot if we didn't have his message in the Bible. Obadiah's message is as powerful and valuable as those of the other prophets. Uniquely, he does not address his message to God's people, but to a people that is extremely hostile to God's people. It is striking that this hostile people is a brotherly nation. This gives a special meaning to Obadiah's message.

Let us listen to the message of this man of God. We will discover that also his message contains a lot that is recognizable and current for us.

"For judgment [will be] merciless to one who has shown no mercy" (Jam 2:13a). This verse of James can well be placed as an inscription above the book of Obadiah, as it powerfully represents the contents of the book. Perhaps we are wondering if the indignant prophetic sound of Obadiah is consistent with the New Testament message of forgiveness. But equally, we may wonder if we ourselves are not prisoners of what someone once called 'a kind of sugar-coated Christendom'.

Do we still know the indignation for things that simply cannot be done, things about which God is angry? Obadiah is totally upset about Edom's arrogance and gloating towards Israel, a brother nation after all. But Edom is a brother nation in another sense than Moab and Ammon. Moab and Ammon are descendants of Lot, the son of a brother of Abraham. It is also a different brother nation than the Ishmaelites because the latter are descended from Abraham, but not via Sarah. Edom is a son of Isaac, the promised son of the pleasure of the LORD. Closer to Israel is not possible. Then it turns out: the closer the bond, the deeper the gap. As we prog-

ress in our reflections on this book, the correctness of Obadiah's position against Edom will become more and more clear.

Obadiah, where he prophesied and about what

Obadiah means 'servant of the LORD'. In the Old Testament several people listen to that name (1Kgs 18:3-16; 1Chr 12:9; 2Chr 17:7). Among them is the prophet of whom we have a book – in this case better: a message – in the Bible. He cannot be identified with any other Obadiah. The only time we encounter his name is in this book of the Bible. In order to find out more about him we will have to look at the contents of his message.

When we read that message, the place of action turns out to be the city of Jerusalem and its immediate surroundings, the mountainous land of Judah. Zion, the holy mountain of God (Oba 1:16,17,21), is the center of it. Nevertheless, the prophecy of Obadiah does not have Jerusalem or Judah as its subject, but Edom. Edom is told that it will be punished for what it has done to the children of Judah, after Jerusalem has been taken.

When did Obadiah prophesy

Obadiah is one of the first of the minor prophets. It is assumed that he prophesied during the reign of Jehoram (848-841 BC). Some historical biblical data is favorable of this assumption. In the time of Jehoram the Philistines and the Arabs invaded Judah and plundered Jerusalem (2Chr 21:16-17; Joel 3:3-5; Amos 1:6). Under Jehoram, the Edomites free themselves from the domination of Judah (2Kgs 8:20-22). Another clue can be found in the comparison with what Jeremiah says about Edom in his prophecy (Jer 49:7-22). This is very similar to what Obadiah says.

Although the minor prophets are not strictly chronologically arranged, the place he occupies also gives an indication that he belongs to the older prophets. The minor prophets can be divided into main groups in such a way that the prophets who prophesied before the exile are mentioned first, while the three prophets who close the row of twelve have prophesied after the return from exile.

Edom, that is Esau

To better understand the prophecy, it is useful to look at the origin of Edom. Esau was named Edom in connection with the sale of his birthright

(Gen 25:30). On that occasion Esau reveals his true nature. With his deed he shows his contempt for the gift of God. He prefers the immediate satisfaction of a bodily need. He is rejected because he rejects the gift of God (Heb 12:16-17).

Esau personally is never cursed. He has even received a blessing from Isaac (Heb 11:20), although the Name of God does not appear in it (Gen 27:39-40). If he would have served his younger brother Jacob, as God had determined at his birth (Gen 25:23b), there would also have been a blessing for him.

Only after a long history of revelation of hatred and enmity against his brother did God say that He hated him (Mal 1:3). This hatred of God does not concern Esau personally, but Esau in his offspring. Three times it says in the list of descendants of Esau that Esau is Edom (Gen 36:1,19,43). Edom is the name of the offspring of Esau as a people.

Edom's hate against Israel

The first enmity of Edom reveals itself in Numbers 20. The Israelites are on their way to the promised land and must pass through the land of Edom. The request for this is refused by Edom with much display of power (Num 20:14-21). Despite all the courtesy of Moses and the people, Edom continues to show his enmity. They listen to nothing but the wicked and proud whisperings of their own hearts. They have always cherished this basic attitude of enmity.

Later, David submits them through Joab (2Sam 8:14). Under Jehoram they become apostate (2Kgs 8:20-22). As Judah and Israel decline more and more, Edom becomes increasingly arrogant and rejoices in the evil that strikes God's people (Psa 137:7). In Psalm 83, we see how Edom is part of the last alliance against Jerusalem with the intention of wiping the name of Israel off the earth (Psa 83:5-9). Ezekiel 35 also speaks of this everlasting hatred of Edom and shows that it has been public from the beginning (Eze 35:1-6).

Some descendants of Esau

Edom's hatred of God's people is sharply marked in his offspring. Amalek, for example, is a grandson of Esau (Gen 36:12). The descendants of

Amalek are the first to attack Israel after the exodus from Egypt (Exo 17:8). The LORD says of them that He will “utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven” (Exo 17:14). He will do so through His own people (Deu 25:17-19).

There are still some Edomites who distinguished themselves. There is Haman, the Agagite (Est 3:1-10; 8:3,5; 9:24), who is inspired by only one thing and that is the extermination of the Jewish people. The name Agag is the title of the kings of Amalek. We also hear of ‘Doeg the Edomite’, who murders eighty-five priests of the LORD and exterminates the priestly city of Nob (1Sam 22:17-19). Edom’s hatred of God’s people and his murderousness also characterizes Herod’s family. Herod the Great is an Edomite. He is notorious for his infanticide in Bethlehem. His son Herod Antipas had John the baptist beheaded. Another son, Herod Agrippa I, kills James and also wanted to kill Peter.

God stands up for His people

The previous prophets, Hosea, Joel and Amos, spoke to Judah and Israel. They have presented to the people their unfaithfulness to God and the punishments that God therefore had to give. Obadiah does not address Judah or Israel. He does speak about Judah, but says nothing to their detriment. If God had spoken to his own people through Obadiah, He should have done so in the same way as the other prophets. But He speaks to Edom. That is why He ignores the failure of His own people and speaks according to His own intention.

It is as with His speaking through Balaam (Numbers 23-24). While Moses says in several speeches to Israel that they are rebels, God makes Balaam say in the presence of Balak: “He has not observed misfortune in Jacob; Nor has He seen trouble in Israel; The LORD his God is with him, And the shout of a king is among them” (Num 23:21). When God positions Himself against His people, He acts with them according to His righteous demands. He reminds them of their deviation and chastises them for their sins. But before the enemy, God always stands up for His people (Psa 105:12-15).

No enemy has the right to humiliate, despise, or plunder God’s people. If that happens, He shows what His people mean to Him and that no one can touch the “apple of His eye” with impunity (Zec 2:8). It is like with a

disobedient child. The parents will punish the child for his behavior. But if someone else wants to harm their child, they will stand up for him.

God testifies

It is as if God is challenged by the attitude of the enemy to give a testimony of what His people mean to Him. Every attack of the enemy brings forth what is in God's heart for His own. When God opens His heart over His own, reflecting their value to Him above those who are hostile to Him and His people, we hear the most beautiful and exalted things.

It is beautiful to see that very thing on the cross. That is where man's enmity has become most manifest. On the other hand, there is also the great manifestation of Who God is as light and love, especially in the face of man who rejects Him in His Son. The "chief" of sinners, Paul (1Tim 1:15), can thus become someone to whom God communicates His most glorious mysteries (Eph 3:2-11).

Edom, symbol of hate

In the hatred of Edom another general principle is expressed. In Edom, we see the hatred and enmity of the flesh toward God (Rom 8:7-8) and what belongs to God. Edom is the symbol of hatred for what God chooses. As long as Edom is not confronted with God's people, it does not become public. But as soon as that confrontation is there, what is dormant, emerges with all intensity.

This can also be seen in the preaching of the gospel. People who appear to be neat shoppers suddenly express themselves in biting mockery or snarling annoyance when you offer them a gospel tract. No one knows himself until he comes into contact with what is of God. Such an encounter defines everyone. That is the true and decisive test for the soul. Christ is the perfect criterion and the perfect standard because only He is the perfect revelation of God.

Division of Obadiah

Obadiah's prophecy can be divided in detail as follows:

I The message of the LORD (Obadiah 1:1)

II The humiliation of Edom (Obadiah 1:2-9)

- a. Edom's character (Obadiah 1:2-4)
 - 1. Edom's future smallness (Obadiah 1:2)
 - 2. Edom's current pride (Obadiah 1:3-4)
- b. Edom's disaster (Obadiah 1:5-9)
 - 1. Edom's plundering (Obadiah 1:5-6)
 - 2. Edom trapped (Obadiah 1:7)
 - 3. God's initiative (Obadiah 1:8-9)

III The indictment against Edom (Obadiah 1:10-14)

- a. The reason for the indictment (Obadiah 1:10)
- b. The statement of the indictment (Obadiah 1:11-14)
 - 1. The indictment described (Obadiah 1:11)
 - 2. The indictment repeated and supplemented (Obadiah 1:12-14)

IV. The day of the LORD (Obadiah 1:15-21)

- a. The judgment on Edom (Obadiah 1:15-18)
- b. The occupation of Edom and other territories (Obadiah 1:19-20)
- c. The kingship of the LORD (Obadiah 1:21)

A more global division is in three parts:

I The downfall of Edom and its destruction (Obadiah 1:1-9), with

- 1. the council of the LORD to make Edom small by hostile nations and to cast him from his certain height of rock castles (Obadiah 1:1-4); and
- 2. a painting in bright colors of how Edom is completely plundered by enemies and abandoned and deceived by his allies and friends and goes down powerless (Obadiah 1:5-9).

II The cause of his downfall (Obadiah 1:10-14).

III The exercise of righteousness over the nations and Edom and the establishment of the kingdom in Israel and its restoration and victory (Obadiah 1:15-21).

Obadiah

Oba 1:1 | The Vision of Obadiah

*1 The vision of Obadiah. Thus says the Lord GOD concerning Edom—
We have heard a report from the LORD,
And an envoy has been sent among the nations [saying],
“Arise and let us go against her for battle”—*

What Obadiah is going to say in this prophecy, he has seen. This is what the word “vision” points to. How he has observed what he transmits in the following verses is not entirely clear. He may have ‘seen’ something in his inner being, through something God has shown him. It is also possible that he may have observed an outward appearance, who has told him what to pass on. In any case Obadiah has seen things that are real. He does not pass on a guess, with a probable chance that he is wrong.

In a broader sense it applies to all revelations which prophets receive, that they are things which God shows them. God makes His prophets part of His plans and ways with His people by showing them how He works. The prophets pass on their ‘visions’, that is what God has shown them, to God’s people, with the intention that the people will adjust their lives accordingly.

In many areas of life, people actually proceed in the same way when they try to imagine what is going to happen. The intention of this is, that they will adjust their policies accordingly. For people there is always the chance of error in such a way of working. And if possible the outlines do meet the expectations, then there are always details which do not come true, or which have not been taken into account.

Such guesses and mistakes are excluded with God. He proclaims the end from the beginning (Isa 46:10). Then He not only gives a perfect representation of the beginning and the end, but also of the path that leads from the beginning to the end.

What Obadiah has seen is a word from “the Lord GOD” about Edom. It is not people who give their opinion here, but God speaks. He is “the Lord”,

Adonai, that is the Bidder, and “GOD”, Yahweh, that is the God of the covenant with His people, Who adheres to that covenant. When He speaks, we would do well to listen attentively. It is a word of the Lord GOD over or to Edom. This word begins in verse 2, but first there is an interlude.

The word “we” applies to the prophet who here makes himself one with other prophets or with the whole people. The prophet and the others have heard “a report”, a message. It is a report sent by “an envoy … among the nations of the Gentiles”. The content of the message resembles the announcement of a conspiracy. An alliance is going on among the nations to join forces and take up arms against Edom.

In the “envoy … among the nations” you might recognize something from diplomatic visits to different countries. We can also think of the role of the media that provide the coverage. Yet Obadiah and his people are not stating first of all that they have heard this reporting from the ‘media’, but that they have “heard” it “from the LORD”.

This is an important lesson for our assessment of the messages we hear from the news. When we observe the events on the world stage, are we also open to the voice of God that is heard in it? Do we look at the Bible to see along what line God is fulfilling His plans? Or do we just listen to the political leaders and judge their plans in the light of the power they have in our opinion?

We are wise to put God’s Word next to the news medium and test its messages against the Bible. Then we will not be deceived by the appearance of events, but recognize the voice of the Lord in them. We will notice that diplomats and media, without being aware of it, are being used by God to carry out His plan.

A word like this in Obadiah serves as comfort for God’s people. God makes known to His people that He is concerned with their cause. He shows that He is not indifferent to how His people are treated.

Oba 1:2 | Humiliated

| 2 “Behold, I will make you small among the nations;
| You are greatly despised.

In verse 1, God first addressed His own people with a word about Edom, to give them courage. But after this single word of encouragement for his people, the LORD bursts forth against Edom from verse 2. Without pardon, already at the beginning of His speaking to Edom, He establishes the judgment of that people. In the following verses He expresses the foundation for this determination.

Without any defense Edom must hear and suffer the judgment. There is no possibility to appeal. That will not be possible, because God is the highest court of law. They won't do it either because there is nothing against the accusation. A procedural error is excluded.

It is said as if it has already happened. It doesn't matter to God whether something lies in the future or in the past. For Him it is always present. Time is only an element available to Him. He is not bound by it. Everything that the LORD intends to do, what He says, also happens.

The fate that Edom has to endure here is the special fate of all those who are not satisfied with the part assigned to them, of all those who yearn for more. To be despised then is particularly painful.

The LORD carries out His judgment through the nations He has summoned, first the Assyrians, then the Babylonians. But He does not leave it at that. After this judgment of Edom by the nations, there is also a judgment which He Himself carries out (Isa 63:1-6). But Israel is also called in as an instrument in God's hand to carry out the judgment on Edom (verse 18).

Oba 1:3 | Arrogance

3 “*The arrogance of your heart has deceived you,
You who live in the clefts of the rock,
In the loftiness of your dwelling place,
Who say in your heart,
'Who will bring me down to earth?'*

What Edom radiates is: 'I am strong, we are wise. Edom was known for his wise men. The intelligentsia of that region was in Edom (verse 8). You can still see it today in the rock town of Petra, a whole town carved into the rock. But Obadiah tastes what is behind it. He tastes Edom's deep desire to

make himself totally invulnerable: ‘No one can compete with me anymore; I am sitting here in my ivory tower, and we are safe.’

Arrogance is always misleading. Anyone who is arrogant is counting on being able to handle anything and that nobody is in control of him. In his arrogance, Edom thinks he is safe. In his arrogance, he looks down despicable on his enemies (cf. Psa 10:5b-6). He who looks down on others does not look up, where God dwells. With Edom there is a total lack of knowledge of God and therefore also of himself.

Edom thinks he is inviolable. After all, he lives in almost inaccessible rock houses. His haughty question “who will bring me down to earth?” testifies to his arrogant self-confidence (cf. Isa 14:13; Gen 11:4). He does not express his question out loud, but in his heart. He does not count with God, who resists the arrogant, but gives grace to the humble (Pro 3:34; Jam 4:6; 1Pet 5:5).

Those who think high of themselves believe that others think high of them as well. They are people who “measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves” (2Cor 10:12). They make themselves the center of their thinking and the standard of comparison to which they measure others.

Edom boasts of his power and prestige and forgets that he has squandered his birthright and the prestige that goes with it for a dish of lentil. He has absolutely no interest in the things of God. What use is a birthright that you only get when your father dies (Deu 21:15-17)? You will have to wait for that. You live now and now you want to enjoy it. No nagging about later.

Evidently, Scripture expresses his attitude in the words of his ancestor Esau: “Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew; and he ate and drank, and rose and went on his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright” (Gen 25:34). You can see it in front of you: the man of the field, of the hunt, of the hard life, who only wants a full stomach. In order to fill his stomach, he negligently exchanges a blessing from God for the future for an instant satisfaction of his desires. When that satisfaction is fulfilled, he gets up to start the next adventure. Who does what to him?

Esau and Edom are clear examples of many who do not care about God's blessing. The only thing they are interested in is a successful family life, a successful study, a high function in business. As long as it contributes to their prestige, the caress of their ego, making and keeping their status inviolable.

Let's not think that such behavior can only be found in the world. Situations also occur in the midst of Christians, where blessings from God are exchanged for direct satisfaction of needs. The pastor who is seeking prestige from people, will inevitably tell people what they want to hear, and consequently will be "respected". But he misses the blessing, the approval of God, now and in the future.

Oba 1:4 | There Is No Escape From God

4 *"Though you build high like the eagle,
Though you set your nest among the stars,
From there I will bring you down," declares the LORD.*

In the previous verse we hear Edom boast: 'Who will bring me ...? To that haughty, challenging question suddenly comes the answer of the LORD which he does not suspect: 'I will bring you ...' Edom imagines himself safe, utterly untouchable, unattainable for any power he can imagine. But he counts outside the LORD.

In Edom we see the short-sightedness of all people with whom there is no thought of God. Such people calculate their chances only in the light of what they perceive of possible dangers. But their calculations of probability always crash on Him, Who they do not involve in their deliberations. It is impossible to escape Him.

Edom may feel safe from people, but God knows where to find him. Whether he is at the highest place on earth or at the highest place in the universe, neither is a problem for God. The higher Edom would rise, the deeper his fall would be. Nowhere in the whole of creation can a place be found which is out of the reach of God, which He would not be able to reach. Nowhere in all of creation is there a place where God cannot enter. Everything is within His reach and accessible. It is man's wisdom and also

his salvation if he acknowledges it before God. David is such a person (Psa 139:7-12; cf. Amos 9:2; Isa 14:12-20; Job 39:27-28).

Oba 1:5 | Thieves, Robbers and Grape Gatherers

*5 “If thieves came to you,
If robbers by night –
O how you will be ruined! –
Would they not steal [only] until they had enough?
If grape gatherers came to you,
Would they not leave [some] gleanings?*

To illustrate the total plundering of Edom, two cases are presented in which something is left to be done. If Edom is plundered, nothing will be left. The first case concerns theft and robbery. “Thieves” are people who secretly steal the property of others. “Robbers by night” do the same, but with violence. Such people take what they can use. They leave the other stuff behind.

Among criminals it also happens that a kind of code of honor is used. They don’t see any point in hurting people, and sometimes they won’t cross a certain boundary. Where that boundary lies is, of course, determined by their own depraved conscience. Be that as it may, the conduct of these wicked people is set as an example to Edom. With Edom, there is no limit at all to their depraved actions. Whatever they can steal, they take with them, whether they can use it or not. With them, there is no respect whatsoever for the possession of the other. That is why they themselves will be “ruined” completely and without pardon.

The second case concerns honorable people like “grape gatherers”. They leave some gleanings. God-fearing people do this consciously, because God has commanded it (Lev 19:10; Deu 24:21). Godless people do so unconsciously, because there are grapes that they just don’t see and that are only discovered during an accurate gleaning. But such carelessness does not occur when the time for the extermination of Edom has come. Those who rob him will leave nothing of him.

Oba 1:6 | Hidden Treasures Searched Out

*6 “O how Esau will be ransacked,
[And] his hidden treasures searched out!*

The enemies of Edom are searching all the hidden corners for something that can still be taken; nothing is overlooked (Jer 49:10). Everything to which Edom attaches any value is searched out. Petra, the capital of Edom, is a large warehouse of Syrian Arabian merchandise, where many treasures are piled up and hidden. The enemies search for those hidden treasures because of their value. They also search for it because with the loss of these riches, the wealth and power of Edom will be destroyed.

Many people put their trust in their treasures and their wealth. It makes them feel safe and independent. At the same time, there is the fear of losing them and rightly so. It is precisely their treasures that attract robbers instead of deterring them. Wealth does not offer security, but uncertainty.

Paul says to Timothy that he should warn the rich not “to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God” (1Tim 6:17; Pro 23:4-5). Whoever collects treasures on earth is in great danger of being robbed by thieves, no matter how well they are hidden. This is not the case with treasures in heaven. They cannot be robbed (Mt 6:19-21).

Oba 1:7 | Edom Is Cheated

7 *All the men allied with you
Will send you forth to the border,
And the men at peace with you
Will deceive you and overpower you.
[They who eat] your bread
Will set an ambush for you.
(There is no understanding in him.)*

Edom not only seeks protection in his rocks and treasures, but also seeks support from his allies. They will be deceived by this as well. Their allies, to whom they send their messengers to ask for help, will send those messengers back to the border because they do not want to be involved in Edom’s entanglements. Even their friends and beneficiaries abandoned him, deceived him. Nothing and nobody is there anymore on which they can rely. They are all alone.

The sentence “there is no understanding in him” indicates that Edom knows nothing of the evil that will be done to him from sides from which

he does not expect it. His famous sages, in their widely acclaimed wisdom, have not taken into account the deception and power of the so-called friends. He will see all his calculations and expectations fail, blind as he is to the traps laid by those who depend on him.

In the unfaithfulness of allies, friends, and beneficiaries, Edom receives legitimate retribution for the treatment of his brother Jacob, which is discussed below. Because of the misfortune into which Edom is plunged, they will lose their usual understanding and no longer know how or what to do. They will lose all sense of the path to salvation.

This is the fate of all those who rely on their own wisdom. They imagine themselves to be all-knowing, but have no knowledge of the human heart and of God's actions.

Oba 1:8 | The Wise Men Destroyed

*8 "Will I not on that day," declares the LORD,
"Destroy wise men from Edom
And understanding from the mountain of Esau?*

The words “declares the LORD” indicate the beginning of a next section that includes verses 8-9. In verse 4 these words form the conclusion of the part of verses 2-4. In verses 8-9, God speaks of the destruction of Edom that hangs over this people as a threat. He Himself takes this destruction in hand. The time when He will make the judgment is “on that day”. As so often in the language of the prophets, this means the time when God will openly enter the world to fulfill all His prophecies. For the wicked it means judgment; for His oppressed people it means deliverance and salvation.

The Edomites, and especially the tribe of the Temanites (Amos 1:12; Hab 3:3), are known for their wise men (Jer 49:7; Job 2:11; 4:1). But that wisdom will not bring them salvation. In the previous verse it is already stated that their wisdom leaves them in the lurch in the face of their allies and friends. Here the wise men themselves are destroyed from Edom by the LORD.

Step by step, Edom is deprived of every resource they believe they have. After relying in vain on their rocks, riches and allies, they now also lose their wise men and with them their understanding.

Oba 1:9 | The Mighty Men Are Cut Off

*9 “Then your mighty men will be dismayed, O Teman,
So that everyone may be cut off from the mountain of Esau by slaughter.*

The extermination of Edom is nearing completion. After Edom's wisdom is taken away, he is deprived of his strength. When wisdom and understanding are taken away from them, the courage of brave warriors also falls away. Stiffened with fear, they will not be able to defend their people. They will not be able to resist when the people are murdered and exterminated.

The most powerful heroes do not benefit if God is not for us. If He is for us, nothing can harm us; if He is against us, nothing can help us.

Oba 1:10 | Violence to a Brother

*10 “Because of violence to your brother Jacob,
You will be covered [with] shame,
And you will be cut off forever.*

This verse is a brief explanation of the charges detailed in the following verses. The indictment is summarized as “violence to your brother Jacob” (cf. Psa 50:20; Joel 3:19). The special thing about the sin of which Edom is guilty and for which it will receive all the above judgments is that it is a sin against his brother. Violent injustice is all the more reprehensible when it is done to a brother.

The brotherly relationship is indicated even more sharply by the use of the name “Jacob”, Esau's twin brother. The awareness that the Israelites are their brothers should have encouraged the Edomites to help their brothers in their distress. Instead, they have not only shown gloating, but have tried to increase the suffering by supporting the enemies of Israel.

Oba 1:11 | One of Them

*11 “On the day that you stood aloof,
On the day that strangers carried off his wealth,
And foreigners entered his gate
And cast lots for Jerusalem—
You too were as one of them.*

Edom kept aloof when Judah was conquered by his enemies. They stood by and watched, without offering a helping hand. It didn't stop there. After Judah was conquered by the enemy, Edom joined the enemy. He joined the enemies to kick Judah even further into the ground.

They not only watched how lots were cast for prisoners and goods captured (Joel 3:3). They have rejoiced and expressed their approval. Their attitude was: Well done, this is what Judah deserves. For this attitude toward Judah and especially toward Jerusalem the LORD will judge Edom (Eze 35:11; Isa 34:8; 63:4).

In trials after the Second World War (1940-1945), people of Hitler's regime were convicted if it could be proved that they knew about war crimes, but did not take action against them. The fact that they had not committed those crimes themselves, personally, did not result in a reduction in punishment. Even under Dutch law it is punishable to watch and keep aloof while things happen under your eyes that are not acceptable. Anyone who does not act against evil according to the possibilities he has, makes himself one with evil.

As Christians we are not called to fight all evil in the world. But when God's people are besieged and persecuted, we are not allowed to stand idly by. The least we can do is pray and sympathize with the persecuted "as though in prison with them, [and] those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body" (Heb 13:3). Wherever we have the opportunity, we will actually help, either with money and goods, or by providing shelter for the persecuted.

That is different from enriching yourself on the persecuted and expelling them. God will confront every human being with his aloofness where clearly sides should have been taken. He will show that this aloofness meant an actual unification with evil. There will be no apologies. There will be no argument against His statement.

Oba 1:12 | Gloating, Rejoicing, Boasting

12 *"Do not gloat over your brother's day,
The day of his misfortune.
And do not rejoice over the sons of Judah"*

*In the day of their destruction;
Yes, do not boast
In the day of [their] distress.*

Verses 12-14 form a remarkable whole. In them we find a series of eight negative statements that Edom has expressed about the misery that has come over Judah. Each of these negative expressions corresponds to a description of “the day” of Judah’s calamity. Each time there is talk of “the day,” a period is indicated in which Judah undergoes the discipline of God through the enemy.

Edom did not just keep aloof, when it should have come to his aid. Besides that, he has been gloating over the calamity that struck Judah. They stood there en masse, rubbed themselves in the hands of pleasure, chuckling about what was happening. They said as it were: ‘That’s how we like it!’ The sight was a lust for their eyes. The downfall of Judah made them happy.

Before we condemn the attitude of Edom – and it is to be condemned! – let’s examine ourselves honestly and ask ourselves: Don’t I sometimes have an inner satisfaction when somebody else with whom I have a difference of point of view is in trouble?

With Edom it did not stop at gloating. They also expressed it audibly by boasting, by putting up a big mouth instead of speaking words of consolation. The spirit of Edom can be observed almost daily in our time. The suicide attacks in Israel are applauded by the Palestinians. A man whose son blew himself up said he regretted that his son had been unable to use an atomic bomb. The sowing of death and destruction among the people of Israel brings great joy and boast to all the enemies of that people.

(I say this within the framework of Obadiah’s prophecy and not as a justification of Israel’s attitude. There is no such justification, because they still want to maintain their rights self-willingly, without conversion to God and faith in the Lord Jesus.)

Because all enmity toward Judah ultimately concerns God and His Anointed (Psa 2:1-2), He will judge Edom (Eze 35:12-15).

Oba 1:13 | Looting

*13 “Do not enter the gate of My people
In the day of their disaster.
Yes, you, do not gloat over their calamity
In the day of their disaster.
And do not loot their wealth
In the day of their disaster.*

Although they did not help to conquer Jerusalem, they appeared at the gate of God's people, aptly called "My people" by God here. Challengingly, they took their seats there, as if they were in charge. They looked down on the calamity that had struck their 'brother' Judah with haughtiness and undisguised gloating. They had not helped to conquer Jerusalem, but they did help to loot the city, eager as they were to share in the spoils. Edom reached out to the possessions of Israel. They took what God had expressly denied their ungodly ancestor because He had given it to Jacob.

Through this looting, they took an active part in the crime. In addition to an increase in their possessions, they also delivered an increase in the suffering of Judah. Seeing that suffering also gave them inner satisfaction. Judah suffered pain because of the lack of their possessions. The pain of Edom's amusement came on top of that. In this way, Edom kicked someone who was already in misery even deeper into it and found his pleasure in it.

Oba 1:14 | Extermination and Surrender

*14 “Do not stand at the fork of the road
To cut down their fugitives;
And do not imprison their survivors
In the day of their distress.*

It did not stop at gloating, boasting and looting. Edom chose a tactical point to do further mischief to Judah. They were animated by an insatiable hatred. After the possession, the people themselves had to suffer from them. Murder and surrender to the enemy were a welcome addition to the suffering already inflicted (Eze 35:5).

It is tragic to see how those who had escaped and were on the run were awaited by a brother nation to be killed and robbed. Edom took part in the disaster that occurred over Judah by acting as a mocking spectator and as one who is in league with the enemy.

Oba 1:15 | The Day of the LORD

15 “For the day of the LORD draws near on all the nations.

As you have done, it will be done to you.

Your dealings will return on your own head.

Following the judgments that are to come about Edom, Obadiah is going to speak of “the day of the LORD”. Without quitting the subject of Edom, the day of the LORD is announced over all other peoples who, like Edom, have looked at and treated Israel hostile.

The day of the LORD is not a day of twenty-four hours, but covers the period of time in which the LORD rises up, intervenes in the affairs of the world and governs the world. His rising will be the turning point in the history of the world, where it is no longer man who decides, but He. Now it still seems that man has everything to say on earth. But when the day of the LORD comes, He will take control of the world in a way which is visible to everyone.

The LORD appears, He becomes public. “Day” points to light, to becoming public. This means that it is no longer about judgments in secret or actions in providence, as happens in the time in which we live. With that “day” the divine judgments are connected that will be carried out by Christ as Yahweh God of Israel, when He appears in glory.

The day of the LORD means the judgment for Babylon (Isa 13:9), for Egypt (Jer 46:10), for Israel and Assyria (Joel 1:15; 2:1,11,31; 3:14), for Israel (Amos 5:18,20; Zep 1:7) and for Edom (Oba 1:15). Edom will be requited on that day according to what it has done itself. The roles are then completely reversed (2Thes 1:6-7).

Oba 1:16 | God’s Retribution

16 “Because just as you drank on My holy mountain,

All the nations will drink continually.

*They will drink and swallow
And become as if they had never existed.*

The Edomites had been drinking on God's holy mountain. They had been feasting on His blessings in the place where He wants to be served. Now, together with "all the nations", they will be given to drink from the cup of God's wrath (Jer 25:15-19; Lam 4:21-22; Psa 60:3; Job 21:20; Rev 14:10). They will continually, incessantly, receive and experience God's wrath, until they finally cease to exist as nations, whereby even their remembrance is wiped out.

What God says of Edom applies to all nations that have been hostile to Judah. Edom represents those peoples. Edom and the nations at large will drink from the cup when they come in the same oppressive circumstances as Israel was.

Oba 1:17 | Mount Zion for Israel

*17 "But on Mount Zion there will be those who escape,
And it will be holy.
And the house of Jacob will possess their possessions.*

The word "but" with which this verse begins indicates the contradiction between the previous verses and what follows now. After the judgment on Edom and the nations that possess the same spirit as Edom with respect to God's people, in the prophecy now follows the announcement of the kingdom of God. The establishment of God's kingdom is related to the exaltation of Israel as head of the nations (Deu 28:13). Opposite the extermination of the nations is the salvation that is given to God's people.

The center of this salvation, this redemption, is "Mount Zion". That is the mountain where God will dwell among His people and from where He will reign (Joel 3:17a). This verse contains the merciful promise to Israel that he will be restored.

To anyone who acknowledges God's judgment as right, i.e. confesses his guilt and repents, God points out a place where one can escape judgment. That place is Zion. All who are there are the true people of the LORD. For them, Zion is a sanctuary, a mountain where God dwells, together with those who have confessed their sins. God sees them as cleansed, for He

imputes to them His righteousness on the basis of the work of His Son, Who died for the sins of everyone who confesses them. They can therefore be in God's presence.

God's sanctuary also means protection against any threat from the enemy. Whoever is there is inviolable, for who can stand up against God? There is not only protection. There is more. After the enemy has been judged, the people who have sought refuge on the mountain of God will be repossessed of their possessions.

How all this will work is written in verses 18-20. Judah and Israel will take possession of the nations, destroy Edom and extend their borders in all directions. The Israelites scattered among the nations will return in their extended inheritance. Verse 21 describes the end result: judgment on Edom and the reign in the hands of the LORD.

In a spiritual sense, Mount Zion stands opposite Mount Sinai (Heb 12:18-22). Sinai is the mountain of the law, with which judgment is connected. Zion is the mountain of grace, with which blessing is connected, which is evident from all the Scriptures where this mountain is spoken of, also here in Obadiah.

Obadiah speaks of a literal mountain, with which earthly blessing is connected. Israel, the twelve tribes, will receive that blessing when Christ will reign over the earth as King. But for us, Christians, it is a spiritual mountain and the heavenly blessing attached to it. We should interpret the text "but you have come to Mount Zion" (Heb 12:22) in that sense. We are connected with a heavenly Christ. By this we are separated from the law and the whole religious system that is connected to it.

The letter to the Hebrews is one great plea for letting go of the earthly religion, because He Who was the center of it, Christ, has been rejected. He is now in heaven. Spiritually speaking, Mount Zion does not mean possession on earth, but possession in heaven for everyone who is connected to Christ. For the Christian, coming to Mount Zion is connected with taking possession of spiritual blessings.

God has given His own "everything pertaining to life and godliness" (2Pet 1:3). He "has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly [plac-

es] in Christ" (Eph 1:3). They possess in Christ "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col 2:3). Christians possess immeasurably much.

Unfortunately, many do not take possession of these treasures, they show no interest in them at all. Some have bookcases with beautiful reading, but they don't read in them. They have brothers and sisters in the faith, but they do not enjoy fellowship with them. They are absorbed in the things of the world, in their profession, in their hobby. But there is an opportunity to really take possession of what we have received, to come to Mount Zion, that is, to come into God's presence and share in His holiness.

Oba 1:18 | The Houses of Jacob, Joseph and Esau

*18 "Then the house of Jacob will be a fire
And the house of Joseph a flame;
But the house of Esau [will be] as stubble.
And they will set them on fire and consume them,
So that there will be no survivor of the house of Esau,"
For the LORD has spoken.*

"The house of Joseph" stands for the ten tribes. "The house of Jacob" therefore seems to refer especially to Judah. Obadiah uses the name Jacob instead of Judah, because since the division of the realm, Judah only represents the people of God. In the future both empires will again be joined into one realm (Jer 31:31; Eze 37:16).

Mentioning the two "houses" indicates that the destruction of Edom will occur throughout Israel (cf. Isa 11:13-14). They are a fire to destroy what does not belong to God (cf. Zec 12:6). They do not act out of personal vengeance, but to carry out the commission of God, "for the LORD has spoken". The Lord Jesus is also like a fire to cleanse His people (Mal 3:2; Jer 5:14; 2Thes 2:8).

Oba 1:19 | Restoration Finds Its Way

*19 Then [those of] the Negev will possess the mountain of Esau,
And [those of] the Shephelah the Philistine [plain];
Also, possess the territory of Ephraim and the territory of Samaria,
And Benjamin [will possess] Gilead.*

After consuming their enemies, God's people will take possession of their land and expand their territory in all directions. From this verse it appears that in the glorious end times the border will be shifted considerably to the east, the mountains of Esau, as well as to the west, the land of the Philistines. The places mentioned in verses 19-20 cover the east and west, north and south. In these verses several times there is talk of 'possess'. This connects to what has been announced in verse 17, that the house of Jacob will "possess their possessions".

"The Negev" means the population of the South, that is, the south of Canaan. They are mentioned first because they will take possession of the mountains of the Edom which has just been judged. "The Shephelah" is the population of the hilly country, situated between the mountains of Juda and the Philistine plain.

But there is not only restoration for Judah. The ten tribes will also repossess the area taken from them by the Assyrians. Benjamin will possess Gil-ead, which is on the other side of the Jordan, outside the country.

Oba 1:20 | The Possessions Received Back

*20 And the exiles of this host of the sons of Israel,
Who are [among] the Canaanites as far as Zarephath,
And the exiles of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad
Will possess the cities of the Negev.*

All those who were exiled from the ten and the two tribes, or sold to distant lands (Joel 3:6), will also regain their possessions. God does not forget them. Whether the rightful owners are in the land or outside it, Obadiah speaks of the fact that on the "day of the LORD" (verse 15) all of Israel will get its land back.

The main theme of verses 19-20 is that Israel, according to the promise given to Abraham, will break out in crowds to the four winds (Gen 15:18-21; cf. Gen 28:14). The areas mentioned by Obadiah are also found in the commission given to Israel by law to take possession of those areas (Deu 1:7-8).

Oba 1:21 | The Kingdom Will Be the LORD's

| 21 The deliverers will ascend Mount Zion

*To judge the mountain of Esau,
And the kingdom will be the LORD's.*

Here we are back in Zion, the center of the restored Israel. The name “deliverers” refers to the state of emergency from which these deliverers have delivered Israel (cf. Jdg 2:16; 3:9,15; Neh 9:27). The deliverers (literally, “saviors”) are the tribal chiefs of Judah (Zec 12:6-8). The way in which the deliverance comes about is described in verse 18.

These deliverers will especially dominate the mountains of Edom. Edom is here again the representative of all heathen peoples, so that here the rule of Israel is presented all over the world. The LORD will then accept His Messianic kingship and exercise a general kingship (Psa 2:6-9). He has let ‘the deliverers’ pave the way for this (cf. 1Chr 11:10).

The last part of this verse of Obadiah and the end of his prophecy is the climax (cf. Isa 24:23). The LORD is indeed Israel’s “King from of old” (Psa 74:12). He is in truth “the living God and the everlasting King” (Jer 10:10), “a great King over all the earth” (Psa 47:2,7). The public acknowledgment of this is still in the future. But the day will come when every knee will bow before Him. Among the nations will then be said: “The LORD reigns” (Psa 96:10).

This proclamation is taken from heaven, where loud voices are heard saying: “The kingdom of the world has become [the kingdom] of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever” (Rev 11:15). The prayer: “Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven” (Mt 6:10) has then been answered.

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